

Padre Pio Prayer Groups

National Office

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Dear Spiritual Children and Friends of Padre Pio,

January 2026

In this New Year of Grace 2026,
May the heavenly Child look benevolently on your soul.
And may the light that flooded the minds of the devout shepherds at Bethlehem
enlighten your mind and never abandon you.
(*P.Pio to P.Benedetto, 1 January 1921*)

The Lord give you holiness, joy, and peace now and throughout the New Year 2026!

I must not let the first day of the year go by without sending your soul greetings from mine...I pray for every sort of blessing and spiritual happiness before the Lord...Take care to render your heart more pleasing to our divine Master, day by day, and see to it that this present year is more fertile in good works than the one gone by. Because at the same place with which the years pass and eternity approaches, we must redouble our courage and raise our spirit to God, serving Him with greater diligence in everything that our vocation and Christian profession obliges us...This alone can enable us to reach the port of eternal salvation. Face the trial to which Providence exposes you, but don't lose heart, don't be discouraged: Fight valiantly and you will obtain the reward of strong souls...Do not let your hearts be troubled in the hour of trial, because Jesus has promised real assistance to those who follow Him...Remember Jesus when you are in the hour of trial, turn to Him and you will always obtain relief, gaining and singing eternal glory...Therefore, live tranquilly, my daughter, follow the path on which the Lord has placed you...God Who has taken you by the hand to lead you along unknown paths, guides you; confide in Him, and don't be afraid. Don't complain that God has abandoned you, because this makes no sense. God is with you...May Jesus make your heart more and more His. Long live Jesus!

(letter to an unidentified person, from 1917 or 1918)

Padre Pio offers us, through this letter to an unknown spiritual daughter, a very simple and wonderful rule for a blessed and joy-filled New Year 2026, as well as for every day of our lives. Words come easy. External signs of what we say seem obvious but do not always truly express what they imply. To send the greetings of one's soul to another is to communicate in the realm of the spirit. This communication binds together in truth and love. The transparency of truth and the surrender of love is the relationship in the spirit that allows the soul to take its flight into God. The Child Jesus reminds us that God became one of us – His own creation – so that we could share by grace an intimacy with God forever. Whatever gift you desired for Christmas, you can't beat this one! Grace transforms the one "graced" with the very likeness of God.

Once we come to see the vulnerable God as an Infant in the Crib at Bethlehem, we can understand the man nailed to the Cross of Calvary. For centuries people awaited the coming Messiah. As time elapsed, they began waiting for a Messiah as they imagined he would be and not as the one prophesied for centuries by God through His prophets. When God incarnate finally was seen as a human being, the people were "blind" to who He was. Eventually they treated Him as we know they did. Here we are again. The mystery slowly reveals itself

from the Crib to the Cross! For Jesus, these two cannot be separated. The journey is always the same: from history to mystery to glory!

As the mystery of the Incarnation unfolds these days, we are immediately brought to consider the Youth Jesus and the Holy Family. The Young Jesus as a teenage boy has come of age. The first recorded words of Jesus in the Gospels, however, present a scene that might leave some people a little perplexed. Jesus comes across acting like an arrogant or at least insensitive adolescent. He seems to be asserting His independence now that the Jewish community considers this twelve year old boy a man. He appears to be doing "His own thing". His parents - Mary, His Mother and Joseph, His Messianic Father - anguished three days looking for Him. Eventually finding Him in the Temple, His Mother asks *why* (Luke 2: 30)...why did He remain in Jerusalem, why didn't He ask them, why did He allow them to feel such anguish? Jesus' response would probably make some parents quite annoyed, to say the least. Rather than apologize, His response is: *Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I had to be in my Father's house?* (Luke 2: 39). It seems as though Jesus makes his parents' presence in His life insignificant. These must have been difficult words for His loving parents to hear. In any case, the Gospel tells us that He obediently *went to Nazareth with Mary and Joseph and was subject to them* (cfr. Luke 2: 51).

Some preachers have explained this episode with a spirituality that places the twelve year old Jesus already beginning His public ministry. I would rather see the moment as a normal family situation concerning parents and adolescents. And there is something here on which to reflect. This situation probably encouraged the members of the Holy Family to assess the role that each one in the family was called to fulfill, including Jesus. As parents they understood the role they must fulfill. As the child, Jesus realized what was His to be/do. They fulfilled their roles faithfully. Obedience would be the key word and virtue. This obedience was the fruit of a Love that no other family has ever or will ever experience.

Love helps us to hear those words, *Why were you looking for Me?* (rf. Luke 2), in a totally different sense. They are not as arrogant or as insubordinate as they may seem at first. Hidden within the person of Jesus that everyone saw, was the majesty of the divinity that others would have to discover and either accept or reject over a period of thirty years. The Omniscient God Incarnate still needed to experience the learning process of human nature. The harmony of natures in Jesus was still a mystery. It had to be difficult at times for those who knew Him to understand his words and actions. For Jesus both natures were in harmony and worked together. Nevertheless, the external visible "balance" between the two must have confused those who knew him. No miracles, no magnificent external "wonders", but just that "something" that made him "different" but always a pleasure to be with. Harmony and balance within a person offer others calm and serenity when in their presence.

History tells us that this one solitary life existed in time journeying with His people. St. John tells us, *His own did not receive Him* (John 1: 11). We all reflected upon that fact only a few days ago: when *there was no room in the inn* (Luke 2: 7) but a refuge used for animals in which He was born, when Herod sought to kill rather than venerate the Infant King, when a secure homestead was a foreign country with foreign gods rather than the Great God of Israel His Father, and when return to familiar surroundings demanded that the family relocate for security sake to a town not their own.

Why were (are) you looking for me? (rf. Luke 2) Where are you looking for Me? Whom do we seek? What are we searching for in Jesus? Is He Who He really is for us, or have we made Him to our own image, and thus missed recognizing Who He is?! From the very beginning many believed in His goodness but not in His God-ness. That He was a great human being was undeniable for many. That He was God, however, was denied by a group whose ideas still live on today. The followers of Arius, who lived in the 3rd century, denied the divinity of Jesus, and that feeling, idea, belief, or however it is expressed is still alive today in many, after sixteen centuries. What the Arians denied and promoted, was never totally overcome. How many today believe in the exceptional qualities

and actions of Jesus but recognize only a great human being endowed with “preter/supernatural powers. But, who is not God!

Denying the divinity of Jesus the Christ reduces His life and all He said and did to a pick-and-choose relationship with Him. If He is not divine, you might learn and follow his teaching, but you can also dissent or reject what He proposes as what leads to Eternal Life. He is thus reduced to someone no different than Buddha, Confucius, or even Ziggy in the comics. The absurdity of it all is overwhelming! Yet that is what so many, even subtly among some Catholics, seem to do. Jesus is a matter of opinion, a choice to be bartered with, a majority vote on issues of major importance, a guru that leads us into an anonymous mass of watered down expressions of religion without faith.

What I have just stated sounds harsh and even critical. Well, it is intended to be! Unless Jesus takes over our lives and we allow Him the first place in our hearts, thoughts, words and actions, anything we do as Christians just makes no sense.

What we think and believe, we will ultimately profess in words and actions. In so doing, we begin building a character for all to see. This determines who we become, and might even indicate our eternal destiny. And it all begins with what I think and believe!

We were imprinted with the character of the Holy Spirit Who inspires us and urges us on to listen to Jesus and believe in Him as the Only-begotten Son of God, conceived by the Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, who suffered, died and rose from the dead. We profess also that He now is with the Father in glory and will judge creation. How we allow that thought to take hold of our hearts will determine how we allow the character with which we have been sealed to take hold of our lives.

St. Francis de Sales reminds us that *we will steer safely through every storm as long as our heart is right, our intention fervent, our courage steadfast, and our trust fixed firmly on God.* Is not this what our own Founder, Padre Pio, reminds us as his spiritual children? We are beacons of prayer shedding the light of faith wherever we gather for adoration, prayer and reflection. Our adoration and Eucharist keep our hearts reconfirmed in our belief in Jesus as God enfleshed in humanity. He raises our frail nature to a level that offers us a share in the divine. Our prayer maintains our intentions alive and encourages us to move forward on faith’s journey. Our group and/or personal reflections remind us of and rekindle within us our trust in God on Whom we now have firmly fixed our gaze so as never to lose sight of Him.

Did you not know that I had to be in my Father’s house? This question came from One Who was so present to the Father that He could not imagine anyone not realizing that the Temple was where He would *naturally* be. Where are we *naturally*, with our minds, hearts, and desires?

While never leaving any practice of fraternity, Padre Pio was always known to be in the Presence. His life, lived with the friars, was one that exuded the divine, not just because of the Stigmata and other spiritual gifts, but because his demeanor spoke of someone who firmly believed. He believed the One Whom he served. He believed in Him as God-Man, and he believed Him, His every word, precisely because he believed He is God enfleshed in nature. This natural composure of Padre Pio was the magnet that attracted so many to him, even those with whom he had to be stern or firm.

Many believing Christians have distorted the image of Jesus to fit their own needs. Jesus is seen and revered as the “holy mascot” of some religious organization rather than the Divine Son of God in Whose name *we live, and move, and have our being* (Acts 17: 28). In the Name of Jesus we seek to fulfill the spirit of Padre Pio for the Prayer Groups to bring more light through our prayer and good Catholic example to a world that has so many

other blinding lights and cacophonous sounds to distract, distort, and even destroy the gifts that God has entrusted to us.

As Spiritual Children of Padre Pio, do we acknowledge Jesus as Lord, Savior...as God? Do we seek Him out in the Temple of our Tabernacles, at the Altars of the Eucharist, in the Wisdom of His Word that we read or hear every week? Have we allowed the heresy of Arius, that denied the divinity of Christ, and that has subtly continued in our society today in many ways, to enter our own lives, rendering Jesus and his words relative, optional, a question of majority vote?

When our beloved Founder celebrated Mass he was transfigured into a living image of the One he offered. When our Padre would hear the sins of God's prodigal children, one could immediately recognize the image of Jesus the Brother Whose compassion and concern were always available to forgive and lift up, even if at times with strong manners. When Padre Pio encountered those in any need or friends who arrived to spend some quality time with him, it was always an experience of God-centered good humor and pleasant company. Holiness makes us fully human and gives glory to the Creator.

When Jesus is present to us, the One Whom we are searching out is felt deeply in our hearts. Our lives are lived as though He were there walking, talking, crying, laughing, praying, struggling, and so on, with us. It is then that we are becoming more like the spiritual children our beloved Padre Pio desires.

Did you not know where I had to be? Sometimes our searching takes us all over. We run from one place to another. We look for miracles rather than mystery. We listen for prophecies rather than His inspired Word, hoping to find the One Whom we already possess but as yet have not been able to recognize. The great and awesome God of Creation, hidden within the frail, vulnerable nature of His creation is waiting for us to let His transforming grace lead us forward as heralds of the Great King Whom we know, serve, love and adore.

When we *adore* Him, then it is that we acknowledge Him as Lord and God. Then it is that we witness the error of the thoughts to those Christians who have minimized the importance of the teaching of Christ. Then it is that the Eternal One is no longer a pious theory to decipher but a Living Reality Who gives our life meaning and direction. Then it is that we can say with St. Paul: *Though he was in the form of God...he emptied himself...and was known to be of human estate...God highly exalted him...So that at Jesus' name every knee must bend in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth, and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father: JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!* (Acts 1: 28).

May Jesus, Our Lord and God, bless each and every one of you throughout this year, and Our Lady and good St. Joseph guide, guard and protect you, and Padre Pio watch over each one of you, his Spiritual Children, and your loved ones, with loving care.

Peace and Blessings
Fr. Francis A. Sariego, OFM Cap
National Coordinator

***Blessed and Happy New Year 2026.
Be Blessed with holiness, happiness and health***